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The Literature of the Piano

The Literature

OF THE

P I A N O

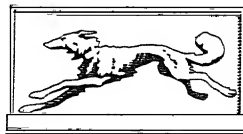
A Guide for Amateur and Student

B Y

ERNEST HUTCHESON

Third Edition, Revised and Brought Up to Date by

RUDOLPH GANZ



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A NOTE TO THE TITLE PAGE

Dr. Hutcheson's subtitle, "A Guide for Amateur and Student," does unusual honor to the "amateur." The author might have dedicated his wonderfully informative volume to the student of the piano, to young and older pianists, to teachers of piano-playing, and to the ambitious amateur. One dictionary defines the amateur as "one who engages in art or sport on a non-professional basis" and "one who practices a sport, profession or art for the love of it, or for mere enjoyment, not for money." I have known dilettantes of music whose understanding and appreciation of the art were very good and whose warmth in performance was more in evidence than that of some professionals in their public appearances. And yet, I object to the frequent statement that an amateur plays only for his *pleasure*. I beg to correct this with a shift of emphasis: an amateur more likely plays only for *his* pleasure. It is true that members of this non-professional guild often express opinions about music and artists which are based on emotion rather than on knowledge. But amateurs are always welcome as lovers of music, and we, the artists, need thousands of them to fill our halls.

RUDOLPH GANZ

Preface

IT WAS A challenging though not an easy task to add important data and general information to a book that has enjoyed great popularity in the United States and in England. Ernest Hutcheson's *The Literature of the Piano* is an excellent inspirational document of brilliant personal comments upon the music of the last few hundred years. Dr. Hutcheson and I were close friends for many years. I always admired him for his keen judgment based upon a wide knowledge of the music of all eras, and I held him in high esteem for his uncompromising integrity and frankness of opinion. His book, a real handbook of music for the piano, is still widely used all over the land, as I can attest from my continual visits to universities and colleges, as well as to meetings of musical organizations. However, the book, its 1949 revision by the author himself, and the last printing of the year 1952 have been unobtainable since 1961. Updating it has been a large undertaking, and I feel privileged and honored to have been invited by the publisher to accomplish this ambitious and interesting project.

The two special articles that I am contributing to the revision: "Technique" and "Fingerings," should be of much interest to teachers and awakened students. The first contains a number of contemporary finger exercises (long overdue); the second is a protest against some illogical—may I say irresponsible and misleading—fingerings, in well-known and popular editions making piano playing more complicated than necessary.

Great changes of style, of expression, and of attitude have occurred during the past twenty-five years, not only in the creating of music, but also in its performance. We Americans have risen rapidly in the ranks of those who contribute important new works to the world literature of music. We now vie successfully with the composers of Europe and those of South America. We have come to the fore in the production of works in the large symphonic and concerted forms as well as in

instrumental music in general. Sonatas for piano and all branches of chamber music by American men and women are being published by alert heads of music-publishing houses, with foresight and confidence, and—last but not least—with considerable national pride. Real, powerful American opera is in the making, and recognition of the first works of this greatly delayed form of good entertainment is in evidence here and in Europe, where the history of opera is more than 350 years old. American opera is alive, and the country at large is taking notice.

Our present era of speed and always more speed, of bold experimentation and accelerated wide research, has produced a daring disregard for all that formerly had been accepted as standards. Yet, that little three syllable word, *DISSONANCE*, is still a most controversial attribute in evaluation of style and character, as it has been at all times during music history. Beauty is a relative expression, especially *NEW BEAUTY*. It is everywhere if you look with open eyes and listen with open ears, and with a heart that can separate itself from the usual, the conventional, and the accepted.

Rossini, the one-sided sparkler of gay but repetitious *stretta*-opera, was certainly wrong when he stated: "What is beautiful is not new, and what is new is not beautiful." All the masters of music, or of any of the other arts, have been temporarily humiliated at some time, by lack of understanding on the part of contemporary colleagues and audiences, in particular those who sit in judgment professionally or supposedly so. Any "new art" does not replace anything that preceded it: it simply creates new values and continues the inevitable evolution. Today's "new art" and the youth proclaiming it represent our time. Not all that is created today can possibly be lasting. Only works that emanate from the heart and are controlled by the head—in other words, result from inspiration plus craftsmanship—are bound to survive. After all, we know there is no progress in music itself. Progress, if any, occurs only in the means of expressing it as a communication to listeners. Did not Ernest Renan, the French philosopher, state: "He is not progressive who does not respect the past"? And may I at this moment quote Voltaire, whose famous remark about beauty is, in my humble view, final: "*Pour le crapaud, la crapaud est belle* [To the he-toad, the she-toad is beautiful]."

It is rather curious that the lesson of "not understanding" or of "misunderstanding" the approach and presence of a new era is never learned. The word "modern" is hundreds of years old. So is "dissonance." Johann Sebastian Bach's colleague, Johann Adolph Scheibe, attacked Bach in his journal *Der critische Musicus* for "forgetting

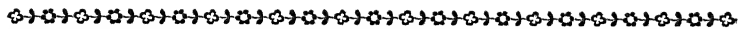
that music is supposed to be beautiful." The Italian critic and music scholar Giovanni Maria Artusi ridiculed and belittled the music and orchestration of Claudio Monteverdi's epoch-making and tradition-breaking opera *Orfeo*, which stands as a monument of a new art in music history. This "learned" writer insisted that the addition of pizzicati and tremolos of the strings and the presence of kettle drums were "tricks to cover up the absence of ideas, especially melody." And our great onetime ambassador to France, Benjamin Franklin, himself a virtuoso on the glass harmonica and a self-appointed music critic, reported from Paris that Gluck's *Orphée et Eurydice* was a complete failure and loss of art, not having any ideas of musical value. And how could Richard Wagner find "weakness" in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony? And was not Chopin accused of writing music devoid of melody, harmony, and form, by one of Berlin's very influential and well-regarded music reviewers, Heinrich Friedrich Ludwig Rellstab? This incomprehensible misunderstanding took place after Franz Liszt's first all-Chopin recital.

And so it has been through the centuries up to today. Having been an alert listener for sixty-five years, an ambitious performer for at least sixty, and having been present at many important events and historically tumultuous concert hall demonstrations—as, for example, the Salzburg festival of 1922 during which local police quelled an anti-Webern riot—I should be permitted to speak both of the peculiar general hesitation to accept the "New Art" produced during the last three generations and of its final triumph. Having been an unsolicited pioneer of the masters of impressionism and of later movements, and having happily survived many unfavorable criticisms of my propagandistic programs from well-known, mature, and otherwise highly esteemed music reviewers, I face—with appropriate curiosity and impartial willingness to become convinced—the most recent efforts and newest elements of creative music: the prepared piano, magnetic tape, *musique concrète*, the electronic approach to sound through generators, and, finally, the performances improvised by the participants. The existence of many electronic laboratories in Europe and America is bound to make us aware that still newer ways of producing sound are in store for us. The young musicians of America and some of us "elastic" oldsters are ready to meet whatever develops. Some efforts of the new approach are naturally still in the experimental stage, but they are bound to become forceful influences upon the future pages of music history. My added last Chapter (XV), "Living Composers," provides more detailed information about the present state of music.

Brahms used to say that the piano was a harplike instrument, an opinion that accounts for the presence in his works for the piano of so many arpeggiated chords in both hands and broken octaves in the bass. Stravinsky declared the piano to be a percussion instrument. I still think that a beautifully voiced and immaculately tuned concert grand is and for a long time to come will be the king of all instruments. The indestructible masterworks of the baroque, classical, romantic, impressionistic, and expressionistic eras are there to safeguard the self-expression that is a pianist's privilege and honor. Whoever will be asked to up-date the Rudolph Ganz revision of the Ernest Hutcheson book will be expected to have evaluated and fully digested all the present varied, bold, and daring offerings of the forerunners and masters-on-the-way of an electronic age that is bound to follow, but will not replace, the music of the past which appeals to the heart.

I wish at this time to express my deep gratitude to my dear wife, Esther La Berge Ganz, who has been of inestimable help in compiling this book; to my nephew, Dr. Felix Ganz; to my friends Dr. Hans Moldenhauer and George Anson for their welcome comments. I have deeply appreciated the many courtesies accorded me by music publishers here and abroad.

RUDOLPH GANZ



A Note to the Second Edition

A NUMBER of errors have been corrected in the second edition. I acknowledge with much gratitude my indebtedness to Mr. James Friskin, to M. Isidor Philipp, and to my son, Harold Hutcheson, for their kindness in reading the book with minute care and pointing out many mistakes that might otherwise have escaped attention.

E. H.